Chapter 7

Urban Defensive Operations

Generally, a modern city magnifies the power of the defender and robs the attacker or his advantages in firepower and mobility. A city can ingest an invading army, paralyze it for weeks on end, and grind it down to a state of ineffectiveness.

"Military Operations on Urbanized Terrain:
The 2d Battalion, 26th Infantry, at Aachen, October 1944"

The skillful defense of an urban area can decisively affect a campaign. The urban area offers many advantages to defending forces. An adroit defender can use the advantages of the urban environment to negate combat power disparities, blunt the tempo of an attack, attrit threat forces, and sap the morale of attacking troops. The defender gains an opportunity to concentrate resources, reconstitute attrited units, and transition to the offense. A successful defense of an urban area can also deny the threat vital resources. Defense in the urban environment is an essential Army capability and can significantly affect the outcome of entire campaigns and the achievement of national objectives.

PURPOSE OF URBAN DEFENSIVE OPERATIONS

7-1. Army forces defend urban areas for various reasons: defeating a threat attack, buying time, economizing forces, protecting an ally's political institutions and economic infrastructure, protecting an urban population, shaping conditions for decisive offensive operations, and shaping conditions for executing stability operations or support operations. During force projection operations, urban areas may be used as initial lodgment areas that Army commanders may need to defend at the outset until they build sufficient combat power. Usually two or more of these purposes apply to the urban defense. Urban defensive operations provide commanders great opportunities

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to turn the environment's characteristics to the advantage of Army forces. Urban areas are ideal for defensive operations and greatly enhance the combat power of defending units.

CHARACTERISTICS OF URBAN DEFENSIVE OPERATIONS

7-2. There are five general characteristics of the successful defense: preparation, security, disruption, massing effects, and flexibility. All apply to the successful urban defense and to the higher commander supporting a subordinate defending in the urban area.

PREPARATION

7-3. The urban area suits the defense since the area's physical characteristics naturally enhance the combat power of defending units. These characteristics include protection, obstacles, and concealment. Urban terrain provides superb defensive positions with minimum preparation. With deliberate preparation, urban defensive positions can rapidly become strong points.

7-4. One primary characteristic of urban terrain that enhances the defense is protection. With little or no advance preparation, buildings, subsurface structures, and walls protect soldiers from direct and indirect fire, interdict indirect fire, limit observation, and limit engagement ranges. Nearly all buildings provide some ballistic protection from direct and indirect fire. Mason and stone buildings with basements and cellars can protect soldiers from most fires except the largest caliber or tonnage bomb. Minimal additional preparation turns them into formidable, defensive strong points.

7-5. Buildings in urban areas, because of their height and close proximity, also can protect soldiers by masking them from indirect fire. The height of a building may interdict the flight path of an artillery round, rocket, missile, or bomb at a point short of the intended target. Masking protects static defending forces and protects forces moving along routes bordered with tall buildings that form urban "canyons". These protected routes can be used for logistics, counterattacks, and maneuver.

7-6. Structurally significant buildings in an urban area can create major obstacles to maneuver. These obstacles immediately canalize maneuver into existing streets and routes without any preparation by the defense. These obstacles then become kill zones for well-positioned and sited defensive forces. Minimal obstacle construction as point obstacles blocking streets and routes can further restrict the maneuver options of the attacking force. Rubble from structures collapsing into streets after fires (intentional or unintentional) can also block routes.

7-7. Buildings also conceal the location, disposition, and intent of the defense. They limit visual observation to the external perimeter of the urban area. They degrade radar and electronic position identifiers and decrease the utility of overhead imagery. The physical aspect of the urban environment greatly enhances the defense by degrading the opposition's intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (ISR) capabilities. Buildings can conceal static defensive positions and the maneuver of defensive forces in the urban area. Although the environment constrains defensive mobility in much the same manner as offensive mobility, the defense has the time and opportunity

to conduct careful reconnaissance and select and prepare routes. This gives the defender the ability to move reserves, maneuver counterattack forces, and plan logistics without observation. Careful preparation provides the defense a mobility advantage over attacking forces.

SECURITY

7-8. The urban area can be an advantage or a disadvantage to the security of defending forces. This largely depends on the nature of the human dimension of the environment. If the population is evacuated or allied with Army forces, then the environment may assist in the security of defending Army forces. However, if the population is present and hostile, then the environment may make security difficult.

7-9. The physical aspects of the urban environment, uninfluenced by the human dimension, may assist in the security of defending Army forces. The combat power of small security forces manning observation posts is greatly enhanced. Forces can more easily restrict and monitor avenues of approach for threat reconnaissance. Defending forces positioned mostly in structures are difficult to locate.

7-10. The physical aspects of the environment may also present some security challenges, primarily with observation. The compartmented terrain limits the field of observation from any one point. The defense may require more security forces to adequately observe the mounted and dismounted avenues to prevent infiltration. Threat forces that successfully infiltrate will be more difficult to locate. These forces will gain numerous hide positions for small reconnaissance units in complex terrain and the effect the terrain has in masking electronic signatures.

7-11. Friendly civilians in the urban area can help identify threat forces attempting to conduct reconnaissance. Civilian activity will also help to mask defense preparations. However, a hostile element of the population may pass intelligence information to the threat. They may assist threat reconnaissance to infiltrate the urban area or provide guides, manpower, or resource support for threat forces. Commanders take measures to ensure strict control of hostile populations. If resources permit, commanders may consider removing potentially hostile civilians from the area.

DISRUPTION

7-12. The urban environment's attributes assist defending Army forces to disrupt the attacker. It does this through compartmentalization, inhibiting command and control (C2), and facilitating counterattacks.

7-13. The physical aspects of the urban area force the attacking threat into compartmented urban canyons that make mutual support between attacking threat columns difficult. Shifting resources from one portion of the threat attack to another is also difficult. Physically, the urban area disrupts tactical communications making synchronization of combat power difficult.

7-14. The urban terrain hinders the mobility capabilities of the defense. However, careful planning, preparation, and rehearsals can facilitate more rapid movement of larger forces. Defending forces can assemble counterattacks

undetected, move them along covered and concealed routes, and achieve surprise at the point of the counterattack. Attacking forces, using the compartmented terrain, often leave forward elements in position to be isolated or expose long and vulnerable flanks to friendly counterattack and interdiction.

MASSING EFFECTS

7-15. The urban environment allows defenders to better protect their centers of gravity and decisive points. The restrictive terrain reduces the attacker's maneuver options. Defenders can position forces in protected and mutually supportive positions oriented on deadly engagement areas. Relatively few well-positioned defenders can generate significant combat power. Without the positional advantage and the corresponding protective effects of the terrain, attacking forces often mass numbers to achieve the necessary combat power.

7-16. Knowing the complex terrain permits defending forces to plan engagement areas that maximize the effects of their combat power. Defending forces can remove fences, walls, rooftops, and even entire buildings to facilitate fields of fire and unmask indirect fire flight paths. Forces carefully choose firing positions for indirect fire systems so that flight paths travel between buildings into engagement areas. By leveraging this knowledge of the terrain, numerically inferior defenders can synchronize devastating fires on offensive forces that are forced by terrain and reinforcing obstacles to mass in confined spaces where fires can have the greatest effect.

FLEXIBILITY

7-17. Defensive flexibility results from detailed planning and mental agility. Defensive planning flexibility forms branches and sequels that include alternate and subsequent positions and emphasize counterattack options. The urban area facilitates defensive flexibility because the urban terrain can be quickly adapted for defensive operations with little or no preparation. The effect is similar to having multiple, prepared positions on nearly every possible approach. The urban area can also permit rapid, covered movement on interior lines. This permits swift movement to and occupation of strong defensive positions with little or no preparation. The defense also has more flexibility since defenders often know and better understand the urban terrain's effects on operations. Normally, defenders will not get lost as easily, will know complex lines of sight and masking effects, and will best understand the ballistic characteristics of individual structures.

7-18. Mental agility allows commanders to see that the best urban defense may actually be to defend *outside* of the area. Such a defense mitigates the danger to the urban population and potentially reduces collateral damage. It takes advantage of Army long-range engagement capabilities and denies the threat the opportunity to "hug" Army forces or noncombatants as protection from fires. This defense may be appropriate when Army forces have enough resources to defend more open terrain, when time permits deploying extensive obstacles and constructing protected positions, and when natural terrain such as river obstacles aids the defense.

URBAN DEFENSIVE OPERATIONS AND BATTLEFIELD ORGANIZATION

7-19. Urban defensive operations are organized within the overall doctrinal framework of sustaining, shaping, and decisive operations. The success of urban defense depends on each operation, but commanders synchronize these simultaneous operations as one action. Sustaining operations in defensive urban operations (UO) ensure freedom of action. Critically, urban sustaining operations ensure security of the lines of communications and establish effective movement control. Shaping operations in defensive UO create the conditions for decisive operations. Shaping operations vary greatly depending on the type of defense. For example, in a mobile defense the shaping operation may be the fixing force. In contrast, in an area defense the fixed defense may be the decisive operation. In the urban defense, decisive operations focus on accomplishing the commander's mission. The decisive operation may not defeat the threat's main effort, and it may not prevent threat occupation of large portions of the urban area if those tasks are not essential to mission accomplishment. For example, if the defense's objective is to protect a critical communications node, then, depending on the commander's overall intent, threat actions to secure an airfield elsewhere may not be important.

TYPES OF URBAN DEFENSE

7-20. Commanders view urban area defensive operations two ways: as conducting a major defensive operation with an urban area in their area of operations and as defending entirely in an urban area.

AREA DEFENSE

7-21. At the operational level, an area defense may include both urban areas and open maneuver areas. The most common defense in an urban area and the most suitable for the characteristics of this distinct environment is the area defense. As a defensive operation, the area defense concentrates on denying threat forces access to designated terrain for a specific time rather than destroying the threat outright. Although an area defense in an urban area does not directly seek to destroy or defeat attacking threat forces, as an objective it does aim to force culmination of the threat's attack. The urban area defense often works effectively to exhaust threat resources and shape conditions for a transition to offensive operations. The urban area may also be used as a strong point to force threat movement in a different direction or to fix threat forces as part of a large, mobile defense taking place in the area of operations (AO) outside the urban area (see paragraphs 7-22 to 7-24).

MOBILE DEFENSE

7-22. A mobile defense can operate *in* an urban area but only under specific conditions. It focuses on destroying or defeating the threat through a decisive attack by a striking force. It requires the defender to have greater mobility than the attacker. To shape a mobility advantage, the urban defender effectively uses the terrain and correctly task organizes his forces mobility. The principles of applying the mobile defense in the urban area remain the same: a small fixing force stops the threat and limits any ability to maneuver while a striking force quickly maneuvers and counterattacks to destroy him.

7-23. One key to executing a mobile defense in the urban area is to entice a threat force into the depths of the urban area where it begins to lose mobility options. A well-placed fixing force augmented with man-made obstacles and taking advantage of the naturally constrictive terrain can stop a much larger force. If the attacking force is largely mounted and armored, its mobility in the urban area may be reduced to less than that of dismounted infantry. In addition, if the attacking force's movement into the urban area is mounted and rapid, the commander's situational understanding also diminishes. Then the striking force, consisting of dismounted infantry forces, can execute the counterattack with surprise from multiple directions and dimensions (subsurface, surface, supersurface to include intrasurface, and airspace). Man-portable antiarmor weapons—firing from flanks and top down and supported by precision indirect fires from both organic and joint systems—can rapidly destroy the threat.

7-24. From the perspective of commanders of the major operation, the urban environment can help defending forces achieve a mobility advantage over an attacker in a broader sense. Defending commanders attempt to shape the battlefield so that the attacker commits significant resources into an urban area, where his maneuver capabilities are reduced (see Figure 7-1). A disproportionately small defending force, which relies on the defensive combat power advantages of the urban environment, reduces and fixes the attacker's maneuver capabilities. Other defending forces mass *outside* the urban area then strike the threat with a combined mobility and firepower advantage.

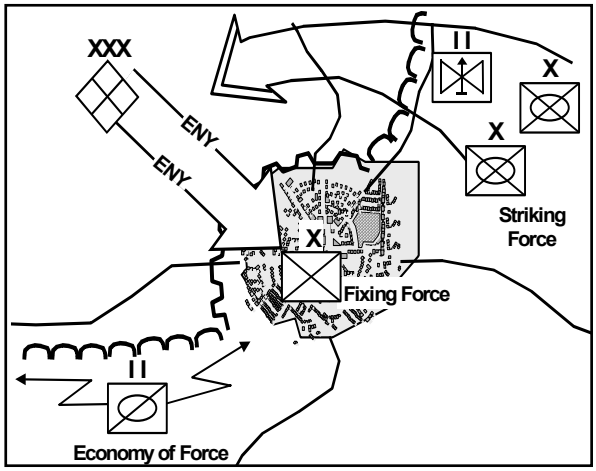

Figure 7-1. An Urban Area Incorporated Into a Larger Mobile Defense

Urban Defense in a Major Operation
Stalingrad – August 1942 to January 1943

The German and Soviet battle for Stalingrad in late 1942 and into early 1943 illustrates how a tactical urban area defense integrates into a larger mobile defense. Stalingrad was a battle fought on a huge scale: it involved army groups on both sides and thousands of square kilometers. Though the city was small, it remained the focus of both German and Soviet offensive and defensive operations during the six-month battle.

In the summer of 1942, the Germans launched a strategic offensive in southern Russia. Its goal was the valuable oil fields of the Caucasus. German forces turning south into the Caucasus exposed a vulnerable flank to Soviet forces positioned between the Don and Volga Rivers. For the German Caucasus

operation to succeed, it had to destroy Soviet forces between the Don and Volga, establish a good defensive line, and capture Stalingrad. This city would anchor the German defense and interdict the critical flow of supplies from the Caspian Sea via the Volga River into central Russia. Stalingrad, by virtue of its name, also had important political and cultural value to the Germans and Soviets.

The opening phases of the German offensive were successful; German forces—the 6th Army and 4th Panzer Army—entered the outskirts of Stalingrad in late August 1942 (see Figure 7-2). After a month of intense fighting, the Germans possessed nearly 90 percent of the city. At this point, the 6th Army commanded all German forces in and around Stalingrad. The Soviet 62nd Army's defense was reduced to a front only a few hundred meters deep and a couple of kilometers long on the banks of the Volga. The Soviet defenses hinged on fortress-like concrete industrial buildings and the fanatical bravery and tenacity of soldiers and civilians fighting in the city's remains (see Figure 7-3).

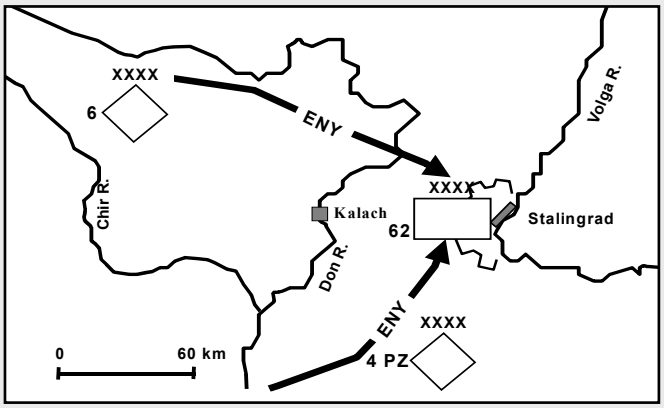

Figure 7-2. German Attacks to Seize Stalingrad

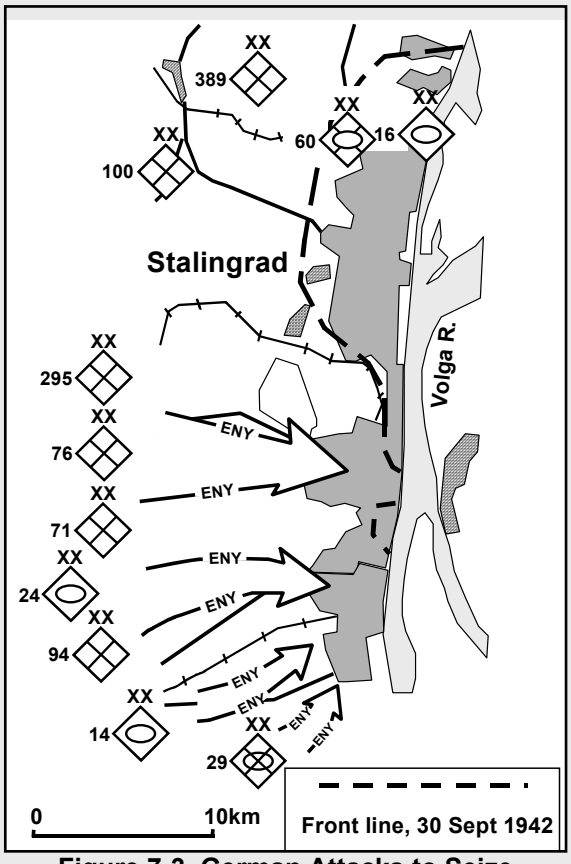

Figure 7-3. German Attacks to Seize Stalingrad, September 1942

Beginning in mid-September, the Soviet command began looking at how to convert the defense of Stalingrad into an operational opportunity. During October and November, the 62nd Army held on to its toehold in Stalingrad. While maintaining the defense of the 62nd Army, the Soviets secretly began to build up strength on both flanks of the German 6th Army. The Germans increased their vulnerability by securing the German 6th Army's flanks with less capable Romanian, Hungarian, and Italian armies. Also, the 6th

Army moved powerful German divisions into the city and rotated with German divisions that were exhausted by urban combat.

On 19 November, the Soviets launched OPERATION URANUS that attacked two Romanian armies with seven Soviet armies. Simultaneously, the 8th Russian Army attacked to aid the 62nd Army in further fixing the German 6th Army. Within five days, the Soviet armies of the Don Front, Southwest Front, and Stalingrad Front met near the city of Kalach and sealed the fate of the German 6th Army's 300,000 troops in Stalingrad (see Figure 7-4).

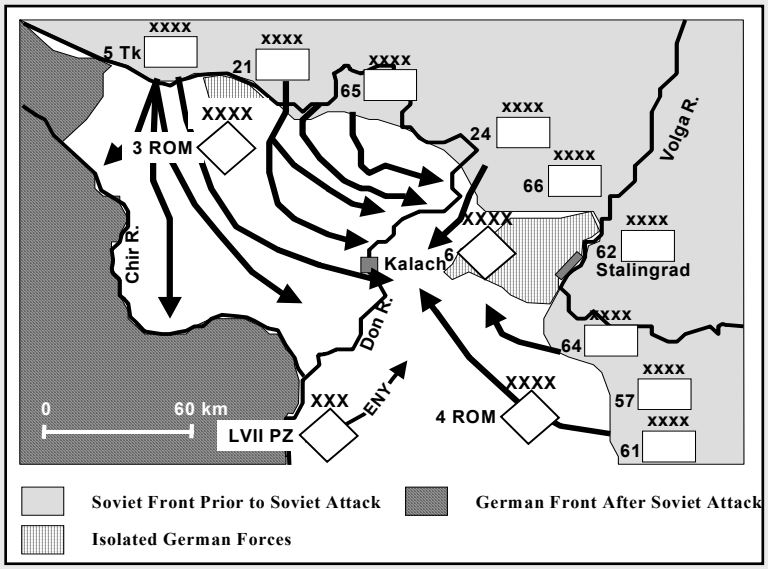

Figure 7-4. Soviet Attacks Trap German 6th Army

On the third day of the Soviet offensive, when encirclement seemed inevitable but not yet complete, the 6th Army commander asked permission to withdraw from the trap. The German high command denied permission believing that the Army could be supplied by air and then a renewed offensive could break through to the city. On 12 December, the German LVII Panzer Corps launched an offensive north to break through to Stalingrad. This offensive made progress until another Soviet offensive on 16 December forced its cancellation. This ended any hope of recovering Stalingrad and the 6th Army. On 31 January 1943, the 6th Army surrendered after sustaining losses of almost two-thirds of its strength. The Soviets took over 100,000 prisoners.

Many lessons emerge from the successful defense of Stalingrad. Tactically, the defense showed how using the terrain of a modern industrial city wisely could increase the combat power of an inferior, defending force and reduce the maneuver options of a mobile, modern attacking force. Another element in the Soviet's tactical success was the Germans' inability to isolate the defenders. The Germans never threatened the Soviet supply bases east of the Volga and, despite German air superiority, the Soviets continuously supplied and reinforced the 62nd Army across the Volga River. Also, Soviet artillery west of the river was able to fire in support of Soviet forces and was never threatened with ground attack.

At the operational level, the Soviets demonstrated a keen understanding of using an urban area within the context of a mobile defense. The 62nd Army's stubborn area defense of Stalingrad drew the bulk of the German combat power into the urban area where they were fixed by a smaller and quantitatively inferior defending force. This allowed the Soviets to build combat power outside the urban area. The Soviets set the conditions for a mobile defense by positioning powerful Soviet armor forces in open terrain outside the urban area against quantitatively inferior German allied forces. In OPERATION URANUS, the mobile defense's strike force destroyed the enemy outside the urban area and trapped the greater part of the best enemy formations inside the urban area. The trapped units were then subjected to dwindling resources and extensive psychological operations, further isolated into pockets, and defeated in detail.

RETROGRADE

7-25. A retrograde involves organized movement away from the threat. Retrograde operations include withdrawals, delays, and retirements. These defensive operations often occur in an urban environment. The urban environment enhances the defending force's ability to conduct retrograde operations successfully (see Figure 7-5).

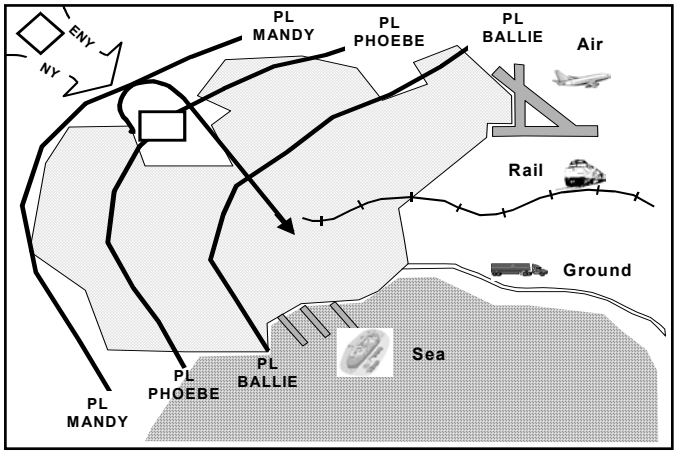

Figure 7-5. Retrograde Through an Urban Area

7-26. The cover and concealment afforded by the urban environment facilitates withdrawals where friendly forces attempt to break contact with the threat and move away. The environment also restricts threat reconnaissance, which is less able to detect friendly forces moving out of position, and presents excellent opportunities for deception actions. Finally, a small security force's ability to remain concealed until contact in the urban environment significantly slows threat attempts to regain contact once Army forces have broken contact and begun to move.

7-27. The urban environment's natural cover and concealment, as well as the compartmented effects, facilitates delays. Delays can effectively draw the threat into the urban area for subsequent counterattack or as an integral part of a withdrawal under threat pressure. Delaying units can quickly displace from one covered and concealed position to another; the repositioning options are vast. Compartmented effects force the attacking threat to move on well-defined and easily interdicted routes and limit the threat's ability to flank or bypass delaying positions.

7-28. The urban area's transportation and distribution network facilitates retiring forces that are not in contact. Properly used, the urban transportation system can quickly move large forces and associated resources, using port facilities, airfields, railheads, and well-developed road networks.

URBAN DEFENSIVE CONSIDERATIONS

> *What is the position about London? I have a very clear view that we should fight every inch of it, and that it would* devour *quite a large invading army.*
>
> Winston Churchill
> *War in the Streets*

7-29. The urban operational framework—assess, shape, dominate, and transition—provides structure to developing considerations for defensive operations. The considerations can vary depending on the level of war at which the operation is conducted, the type of defense, and the situation. Most issues discussed may, in the right circumstances, apply to both commanders conducting major UO and commanders at lower tactical levels of command.

ASSESS

7-30. The commander defending in the urban area assesses many factors. His mission statement and guidance from higher commanders focus his assessment. If the mission is to deny a threat access to port facilities in an urban area, the commander's assessment will focus much differently than if the mission is to deny the threat control over the entire urban area. The METT-TC—mission, enemy, terrain and weather, troops and support available, time available, civil considerations—structure guides the commander's assessment. Of these, the impacts of the threat and environment—to include the terrain, weather, and civil considerations—are significant to the commander considering urban defensive operations.

The Threat

7-31. In the urban defense, a key element is the commander's assessment of the threat. One of his primary concerns is to determine the attacker's general scheme, methodology, or concept. Overall, the attacker may take one of two approaches. The most obvious would be a direct approach aimed at seizing the objectives in the area by a frontal attack. A more sophisticated approach would be indirect and begin by isolating Army forces defending the urban area. Innumerable combinations of these two extremes exist, but the threat's intentions toward the urban area will favor one approach over another. The defending Army commander (whose AO includes but is not limited to the urban area) conducts defensive planning, particularly his allocation of forces, based on this initial assessment of threat intentions. This assessment determines whether the commander's primary concern is preventing isolation by defeating threat efforts outside the area or defeating a threat attacking the urban area directly. For the higher commander, this assessment determines how he allocates forces in and outside the urban area. For the commander in the urban area, this assessment clarifies threats to sustainment operations and helps shape how he arrays his forces.

The Environment's Defensive Characteristics

7-32. A second key assessment is the defensive qualities of the urban environment. This assessment, as in any defensive scenario, is based on mission requirements and on a systemic analysis of the terrain in terms of observation and fields of fire, avenues of approach, key terrain, obstacles, and cover and concealment (OAKOC). This assessment accounts for the unique characteristics of urban terrain, population, and infrastructure as discussed in Chapter 2.

SHAPE

7-33. Commanders of a major operation shape the urban battle according to the type of defense they are attempting to conduct. If conducting an area defense or retrograde, they use shaping actions like those for any defensive action. Important shaping actions that apply to all defensive UO include—

- Preventing or defeating isolation.
- Separating attacking forces from supporting resources.
- Creating a mobility advantage.
- Applying economy of force measures.
- Effectively managing the urban population.
- Planning counterattacks.

Preventing or Defeating Isolation

7-34. Failure to prevent isolation of the urban area can rapidly lead to the failure of the entire urban defense. Its importance cannot be overstated. In planning the defense, commanders anticipate that the threat will attempt to isolate the urban area. Defensive planning addresses in detail defeating threat attacks aimed at isolation of the urban area. Commanders may defeat this effort by allocating sufficient defending forces outside the urban area to prevent its isolation. Defensive information operations (IO) based on deception can also be used. It can mislead the threat regarding the defensive array in and outside the urban area. Such information can convince the threat that a direct attack against the urban area is the most favorable approach.

7-35. If the threat has successfully isolated the urban area, commanders of a major operation have several courses of actions. Two options are ordering the defending force to exfiltrate or conduct a breakout attack of the urban area or an attack by forces outside the urban area to relieve the siege. A third option combines the first two: counterattacks from both inside and outside the urban area to rupture the isolation (see breakout operations in FM 3-90). Time is critical to the success of either operation. Commanders plan for both contingencies to ensure rapid execution if necessary. Delay permits threat forces surrounding the urban area to prepare defenses, permits reorganization of the attacking force, and permits the threat to retain the initiative and continue offensive operations. The passage of time also reduces the resources of defending forces and their ability to breakout. Therefore, commanders and staff of a major operation vigilantly avoid isolation when Army forces are defending urban areas in their AO.

Separating Attacking Forces from Supporting Resources

7-36. Commanders of the major operation primarily use fires and IO for separating in space and time threat forces attacking the urban area from echelons and resources in support. The purpose of this shaping action is the same as for any conventional area defense. It aims to allow the defending forces to defeat the threat piecemeal as they arrive in the urban area without support and already disrupted by deep fires and IO against information systems. This separation and disruption of the threat also sets the conditions for a mobile defense if commanders choose to execute that type of defense. These operations also prevent the threat commander from synchronizing and massing his combat power at the decisive point in the close battle.

7-37. If the urban area is part of a major mobile defense operation, the urban defense becomes the fixing force. Commanders shape the defense to encourage the threat to attack into the urban area. They lure the threat using a combination of techniques depending on the situation. They may make the urban area appear only lightly defended while other alternative courses of action appear strongly defended by friendly forces. Placing the bulk of the defending forces in concealed positions well within the urban area and positioning security forces on the periphery of the urban area portray a weak defense. In other situations, the opposite is true. If the urban area is an important objective to the threat, friendly forces can make the urban area appear heavily defended, thus ensuring that he commits sufficient combat power to the urban area to overwhelm the defense. Both cases have the same objective: to cause a major commitment of threat forces in the urban area. Once this commitment is made, the mobile defense striking force attacks and defeats the threat outside the urban area. This isolates the threat in the urban area and facilitates its destruction.

7-38. In the urban tactical battle, many shaping actions mirror those in all defensive operations. The size and complexity of the urban area prevents defending forces from being strong everywhere; shaping operations designed to engage the threat on terms advantageous to the defense have particular importance. Shaping actions include reconnaissance and security operations, passages of lines, and movement of reserve forces prior to their commitment. In addition, shaping operations critical to urban defense include mobility and countermobility operations, offensive IO, economy of force operations, and population management operations.

Creating a Mobility Advantage

7-39. In urban terrain, countermobility operations can greatly influence bringing the threat into the engagement areas of defending forces. Countermobility operations—based on understanding the urban transportation system, design, and construction characteristics—can be unusually effective (see Chapter 2). Demolitions can have important implications for creating impassable obstacles in urban canyons as well as for clearing fields of fire where necessary. Careful engineer planning can make the already constrictive terrain virtually impassable to mounted forces where appropriate, thus denying the threat combined arms capabilities. Countermobility operations in urban terrain drastically increase the defense's ability to shape the attacker's approach and to increase the combat power ratios in favor of the defense. As

with all aspects of UO, countermobility considers collateral damage and the second- and third-order effects of obstacle construction.

7-40. Well-conceived mobility operations in urban terrain can provide defending forces mobility superiority over attacking forces. This is achieved by carefully selecting routes between primary, alternate, and subsequent positions, and for moving reserves and counterattack forces. These routes are reconnoitered, cleared, and marked before the operation. They maximize the cover and concealment characteristics of the terrain. Using demolitions, lanes, and innovative obstacles denies the defense of these same routes.

Applying Economy of Force Measures

7-41. Economy of force is extremely important to effective tactical urban defense. A megalopolis is too large and too easily accessible for defending forces to be strong everywhere. Forces used effectively in an economy of force role enable the defending force to mass effects at decisive points. Forces used in an economy of force role execute security missions and take advantage of obstacles, mobility, and firepower to portray greater combat power than they actually possess. They prevent the threat from determining the actual disposition and strength of the friendly defense. If, contrary to expectations, they are strongly attacked, their mobility—stemming from a mounted maneuver capability, planning, and an intimate knowledge of the terrain—allows them to delay until reserves can meet the threat. Security forces in an economy of force role take position in parts of the urban area where the threat is less likely to attack.

Defensive Combat Power
Suez – October 1973

At the end of October, the Israeli Army was in the midst of effective counterattack against the Egyptian Army. The Israelis had success attacking west across the Suez Canal. Their armored divisions were attempting to achieve several objectives, to include destroying Egyptian air defense sites and completing the encirclement of the Egyptian 3rd Army, which was trapped on the canal's east side.

To completely encircle the Egyptian 3rd Army, the Israelis had to seize all possible crossing sites to it from the canal's west bank and the Red Sea. Also, as international negotiations towards a cease-fire progressed, the Israeli government wanted to capture as much Egyptian territory as possible to improve their negotiating position after hostilities.

Consequently, the Israeli Adan Armored Division was tasked to seize the Egyptian Red Sea port of Suez on the morning of 24 October. A cease-fire was to begin at 0700, and the Israeli intent was to be decisively engaged in the city by that time and then consolidate their position as part of the cease-fire compliance.

The Adan Division plan to seize Suez was a two-part operation. Each of the division's armored brigades would have a role. The 460th Brigade would attack west of the city and complete the city's encirclement. Simultaneously, the 217th Brigade would attack in columns of battalions through the city to seize three key intersections in the city. This was in accordance with standard Israeli armored doctrine for fighting in an urban area. The 217th Brigade would seize its

objectives through speed, firepower, and shock action. Once the objectives were seized, infantry and armored teams would continue attacking from the secured objectives to mop up and destroy pockets of resistance. The Israeli commanders expected to demoralize the defending Egyptians—two infantry battalions and one antitank company—by this rapid attack. The armored division commander was specifically advised by his commander to avoid a "Stalingrad" situation.

The attack got off to an ominous beginning as mist greatly inhibited a scheduled aerial bombardment in support of the attack. The 217th Brigade began its attack without infantry support and was quickly stopped by antitank missiles and antitank fire. Infantry was quickly integrated into the brigade and the attack resumed.

At the first objective, the Israelis encountered their first problems. A withering barrage of small arms, antitank missiles, and antitank fire hit the lead tank battalion, including direct fire from SU-23 anti-aircraft guns. Virtually all the officers and tank commanders in the tank battalion were killed or wounded, and several tanks were destroyed. Disabled vehicles blocked portions of the road, and vehicles that turned on to secondary roads were ambushed and destroyed. The battalion, however, successfully fought its way through the first brigade objective and on to the final brigade objective.

Hastily attached paratroop infantry in company strength were next in column following the tanks. They were traveling in buses and trucks. As the lead tank battalion took fire, the paratroopers dismounted, and attempted to secure adjacent buildings. The tank battalion's action of fighting through the objective caused the paratroopers to mount up and also attempt to move through the objective. Because of their soft skinned vehicles the paratroopers were unable to remain mounted and again dismounted, assaulted, and secured several buildings that they could defend. Once inside the buildings, the paratroopers found themselves cut off, pinned down, and unable to evacuate their considerable casualties, which included the battalion commander. The paratroopers were on the initial brigade objective but were unable to maneuver and were taking casualties.

A second paratroop company also dismounted and quickly became stalled in house-to-house fighting. The brigade reconnaissance company in M113 personnel carriers brought up the rear of the brigade column and lost several vehicles and was also unable to advance.

By 1100 the Israeli attack culminated. Elements of the 217th Brigade were on all three of the brigade's objectives in the city. However, the armored battalion, which had achieved the deepest penetration, was without infantry support and under severe antitank fire. Both paratroop companies were isolated and pinned down. In addition, an attempt to link up with the paratroopers had failed. At the same time, the civilian population of the city began to react. They erected impromptu barriers, ambushed isolated Israeli troops, and carried supplies and information to Egyptian forces.

The Israeli division commander ordered the brigade to break contact and fight its way out of the city. The armored battalion was able to fight its way out in daylight. The paratroop companies were forced to wait until darkness and then infiltrated out of the city carrying their wounded with them. Israeli casualties totaled 88 killed and hundreds wounded in addition to 28 combat vehicles destroyed. Egyptian casualties were unknown but not believed to be significant.

The fight for Suez effectively demonstrates numerous urban defensive techniques. It also vividly demonstrates the significant effect on defensive combat power of the urban environment.

The Egyptian defense demonstrates how the compartmented urban terrain restricts the mobility and the massing of firepower of armored forces. Trapped in column on the road, the Israelis were unable to mass fire on particular targets nor effectively synchronize and coordinate their fires. The short-range engagement, also a characteristic of urban combat, reduced the Israeli armor protection and eliminated the Israeli armor's ability to keep out of small arms range. Thus, hand held antiarmor weapons were more effective in an urban area. Additionally, Egyptian small arms and sniper fire critically affected Israeli C2 by successfully targeting leaders.

The Egyptian defenders effectively isolated the mounted Israelis by defending and planning engagement areas in depth. The Egyptians synchronized so that they engaged the entire Israeli force simultaneously. This forced the Israelis to fight in multiple directions. It also separated the Israeli infantry from the armor and prevented the formation of combined arms teams necessary for effective urban offensive operations.

Suez also demonstrated how civilians come to the advantage of the defense. After the battle was joined, the population—by threatening isolated pockets of Israelis and building barricades—helped prevent the Israelis from reorganizing while in contact and hindered the Israelis breaking contact. The population was also a valuable source of intelligence for the Egyptians and precluded covert Israeli movement in daytime.

Suez shows the ability of a well-placed defense in depth to fix a superior force in an urban area. Despite the Israeli commander's caution to avoid a "Stalingrad," the Israeli division, brigade, and battalion commanders were quickly trapped and unable to easily break contact. Even a successful defense on the parameter of the city would not have been nearly as effective, as the Israelis would have easily broken contact once the strength of the defense was recognized.

Another key to the success of the Egyptian defense was the Israelis' inadequate reconnaissance. While the Israelis knew the approximate size of the defending forces, they had no idea of the Egyptian dispositions. In this case, time prevented adequate reconnaissance. Key to a successful defense is adequate security to obscure defense dispositions, which permits surprise and shock effect.

The Suez defense was a decisive defeat of elite Israeli forces by regular infantry units inferior in training, morale, and numbers. Total disaster was averted only because of the professionalism of the Israeli armored forces and paratroopers that permitted them to continue to fight and eventually exfiltrate the urban trap. The Israeli forces thus escaped total destruction. Suez strongly demonstrates how the enhancing effects of the urban environment on defensive combat power are significant enough to permit inferior regular forces to defeat elite formations. Since the 1973 Suez battle, US forces in Mogadishu, Somalia, and Russian forces in Grozny, Chechnya have faced similar urban defensive ambushes.

Effectively Managing the Urban Population

7-42. Another way to shape the urban defensive battle is population management. In most cases, defending force commanders are in the urban area before combat. This time gives them the chance to manage civilians. Consequently, they can better manage and protect the population (a legal requirement) and gain more freedom of action for his forces.

7-43. Managing the civilians during the defense is a function of the size, disposition, and needs of the population and the resources available to the commander. Requesting higher support or coordinating with nongovernmental organizations, private voluntary organizations, and the local civil leadership for support may make up shortages of resources. Resources devoted to population management are carefully weighed against availability, military mission requirements, and possible collateral damage affecting tactical, operational, or strategic success. It may prove impractical to evacuate an urban area's population; still, commanders attempt to create and move most civilians to protected areas. Moving the population allows defending forces to more liberally apply fires, emplace obstacles, and relieve combat units and support units of requirements to continue life support for civilians while executing combat operations. Overall, effective civil-military operations can turn a friendly (or a neutral) population into an effective force multiplier providing support to every battlefield operating system.

Planning Counterattacks

7-44. Counterattacks are also an important tool in shaping the battlefield for defensive success. Counterattacks as a shaping tool have two applications: retaining the initiative and separating forces. However, opportunity for effective counterattacks will be brief and, therefore, timing will be critical. If conducted too soon, the counterattack may expend resources required later; if conducted too late, it may not be effective. Commanders understand the effect of the urban environment on time-distance relationships; otherwise, the timing of the attack may be upset and the operation desynchronized. Additionally, commanders develop plans beyond the counterattack to exploit potential success.

DOMINATE

7-45. Dominating the urban area in a defensive operation requires decisively defeating the threat's attacks. Defensive forces use the terrain to their advantage, employ precision supporting fires, and use direct fire from protected positions aligned against carefully selected avenues of approaches and kill zones. The combat power of the defense augmented by shaping actions and the characteristics of urban terrain force culmination of the threat attack. Like urban offensive operations, domination in urban defensive operations typically results from successful actions at the tactical level of war. These actions include—

- Performing aggressive ISR.
- Creating depth.
- Executing an effective obstacle plan.
- Conducting coordinated counterattacks.

Performing Aggressive ISR

7-46. ISR efforts of the defender are focused initially on identifying relevant information about the location and nature of the threat's main effort. Once identified, the defender's ISR focus shifts to assessing the rate at which the threat attack moves to its culminating point. Indicators of culmination may be physical fatigue of soldiers, a breakdown in C2 capability, difficulty providing logistics support, or the increasing time required to reorganize small units to attack. When that culmination is achieved, friendly forces counterattack before the threat has a chance to transition to a hasty defense.

Creating Depth

7-47. Depth in the defense is the key to forcing the threat to culminate. The urban defense cannot allow itself to be penetrated nor permit forward elements to be destroyed. The defense is designed with the greatest depth possible. Defending forces weaken the threat to the fullest extent possible by attack from each position but not permit themselves to be destroyed by fires or close assault. Instead, as threat combat power builds up against individual positions, the use of mission orders permits subordinate leaders to disengage on their own initiative and move on preplanned routes to subsequent positions. Positions are designed to be mutually supporting—withdrawing from one position to a subsequent one while supporting positions cover by fires. The attacker is constantly forced to deploy and reorganize without being able to achieve decisive effects against the defender.

Executing an Effective Obstacle Plan

7-48. Obstacles in the urban defense are designed to break up the threat's combined arms capability. Separating dismounted forces from mounted forces disrupts the cohesion of the attacker and reduces his combat power. It also exposes his individual elements to the effects of asymmetric counterattack. The leading threat dismounted force can be effectively counterattacked by a friendly combined arms element while the threat armored force in the remains vulnerable to antiarmor attack by dismounted forces.

Conducting Coordinated Counterattacks

7-49. The counterattack is one of the key actions of the urban defense. However, the commanders do not counterattack unless there is a reasonable chance of success. As the attacker moves into the depth of the urban area, his forces become fatigued, attrited, and increasingly disorganized. He likely also creates an increasingly long and exposed flank. At all levels, forces defending in urban terrain look for opportunities to counterattack. As the offensive force reaches the culmination point where it can no longer continue to attack with the available forces, the defensive commander executes a preplanned and coordinated counterattack. The counterattack aims to regain the initiative and to make the threat fight in multiple directions. Infiltration using superior knowledge of the terrain (including intrasurface and subsurface capabilities) permits attacking the threat throughout the depth of his formations. Small-scale counterattacks focus on C2 and combat service support capabilities. These counterattacks can set the conditions for a deliberate attack leading to the ultimate destruction of the attacking threat force.

TRANSITION

7-50. Transitions in urban defensive operations occur at all levels. As with offensive operations, commanders of major operations address which units are assigned to continue to operate in the area after defensive operations have ceased. In defensive UO, this task is not as challenging as an occupation mission during urban offensive operations. The psychology of troops defending an urban area differs from those attacking into it. Defending forces become accustomed to the environment, having experience in the environment before combat. In terms of training, it is easier for follow-on missions to be assigned to a unit that has successfully defended the urban area. This course of action takes advantage of the defending units' experience in the area and its relationships with other agencies—agencies that were operating alongside the units before and possibly during the defense. In defensive operations, regardless of the civilians' attitudes, policies regarding that population are established before the successful defense, and the command likely has experience executing operations with civil authorities and other agencies. Thus, these relationships are not new nor as significant an issue as in offensive operations. Therefore, commanders are prepared to execute various stability operations and support operations or use a successful defense to springboard into more decisive offensive operations elsewhere in the commanders' AO.

Transition to Stability Operations and Support Operations

7-51. At the end of a successful urban defense, operational commanders expect civil authority, control, and jurisdiction to increase. Additionally, the civil population will be anxious to return. Defensive combat will require virtually complete military control of the urban area; however, after the successful defense, a rapid transition will occur from military control to civil or joint military and civil control afterward. This transition will require stability operations and support operations and will include tasks such as demilitarizing munitions, clearing obstacles, and searching for isolated threat pockets of resistance. Conclusion of the defensive operations also requires transition to joint civil-military tasks, such as evaluating structures for safety, restoring essential services, and possibly creating joint law enforcement. Commanders of major operations, using a civil-military operations center and G5, anticipate these requirements to ensure a smooth, successful transition.

Transition to Offensive Operations

7-52. Units that have successfully defended the urban area may then transition to offensive operations. A rapid transition to offensive operations will require identification, preparation, and training of units designated to assume missions as the defending units leave the urban area. This preparation emphasizes continuity of policies and relationships already established. A relief in place occurs. The new occupying units provide not only a continuity of policy, but also a continuity of attitude toward the urban area, its population, and its institutions.